

Tuning Protocol Overview

When to Use It

- An artist or teacher wants more feedback about the process and content of his or her work or teaching or lessons.
- A group of collaborators would like to get some feedback on a work in progress so they can refine it or take it to the next level.

Presenter Duties

Presenters provide work in its unfinished state. They can get general feedback or ask for more specific feedback.

Responder Duties

Responders provide warm feedback—they say what they think is working or what they like. If the presenter asks, they may also ask questions about what in the work is confusing or needs improvement—cool feedback.

Analogous Activities

- Tuning a car or musical instrument
- Looking at something from a variety of vantage points
- Reflecting on one's practice
- Revision of a work in progress
- Mid-course correction

Related Tools/Protocols

- Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process (Dance Protocol)

Tuning Protocol



60 minutes

Protocols need enough time to allow for meaningful, in-depth observation and reflection. An experienced facilitator can adapt the protocol to the needs of the group.

Getting Started

20 Min.

Facilitator: Introduce participants to each other if needed and explain steps of protocol.

Presenter: Give a quick introduction to the lesson or work in progress or subject of investigation. State what you would like responders to focus on or what it is you want to get from the process. Present the work.

Responders: Ask clarifying questions. These are factual questions that can be answered with a short reply or a simple "yes/no".

1: Warm

10 Min.

Facilitator: Ask the group about what they like or think is successful about the work.

Responders: Offer warm feedback to the presenter(s).

2: Cool

10 Min.

Facilitator: Check in with the presenter to see if he or she wants more feedback. Ask the group about what aspects of the work might be improved or clarified. What questions do they have? Are there any red flags? Where is there confusion? What could improve the work or project?

Responders: Frame your response in the form of a question: *I wonder if...? Have you thought about...?*

3: Hard

5 Min.

Facilitator: Check in again with the presenter to see if he or she wants more feedback. Ask the group to consider underlying issues or hidden assumptions that have not yet surfaced in the work.

Responders: Ask deeper, more difficult questions that get at larger, structural aspects of the work. Consider where things might be stuck or what barriers might be keeping the work from moving forward. Keep your feedback respectful. For example, *I wonder who else could be at the table? Or, Why and how did you decide to focus on _____? Or, Can you really accomplish all that in 5 days?*

Respond/Open Dialogue/Reflect

15 Min.

Presenter: Reflect out loud on the process, respond to any of the questions raised (if you want—you don't have to answer every question), or comment on anything surprising or unexpected that you heard. During this time the other participants are silent.

All Participants: Participate in an open dialogue about the work in question. This is time for everyone present to share new ideas for next steps and respond to one another directly about what they heard, what they still wonder about, etc.

Responders: Reflect on how the protocol went and how it affected your understanding. Discuss implications for the work in question. Consider where and when this tool might be useful.